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FBI Covered Up Knowing Oswald Could Kill JFK

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Chronicle Staff

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The FBI in Dallas and the Dallas Police Department suppressed for at least five months a written statement which quoted an FBI agent as saying the FBI had advance information that Lee Harvey Oswald was capable of assassinating President Kennedy.

After Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry finally told of his role in the cover-up in a registered, confidential letter to Chief Justice Earl Warren on May 28, 1964, the Warren Commission dropped the matter without investigating further.

The written statement, which was kept locked in a desk at the Dallas Police Department, was made by Dallas Police Lt. Jack Revill, who said an FBI agent James Hosty told him a few hours after Kennedy was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, that the FBI had advance information that Oswald was capable of committing the crime.

Police Chief Curry said in his letter to Justice Warren that he instructed Revill to keep his statement confidential after he was asked to by J. Gordon Shanklin, special agent in charge of the Dallas FBI office at the time.

After Curry produced Revill's statement to the Warren Commission on April 22, 1964, Revill and Hosty were summoned to testify.

Revill stood by his statement. Hosty denied that the FBI had information that Oswald was capable of killing the President. The Warren Commission dismissed it all as a disagreement between the two men "about the conversation which took place between them."

Curry, now, recalling the Revill statement, said:

"There's no doubt in my mind that his (Shanklin's) agent told my agent (Revill) what he did."

After Oswald was captured, Curry said, FBI agent Hosty was quoted as saying: "Lee Harvey Oswald. That son-of-a-bitch. We know him. We got him in our files. We've been talking to him."

Curry said that if the FBI had told him about Oswald at the time, "I'd have had somebody sitting on him."

The documents of the Revill statement and the five month coverup are among the papers of the Texas Court of Enquiry, which existed from Nov. 25, 1963, to Oct. 4, 1964, and are now in the Texas State Archives in Austin.

The Court of Enquiry was established by President Lyndon Johnson on the day Kennedy was buried and it ultimately operated in a supplemental role to the Warren Commission.

It was headed by Waggoner Carr, then attorney general of Texas, and included attorneys Leon Jaworski of Houston and Robert Storey of Dallas.

According to papers in the archives, which include copies of the correspondence among Curry, Warren and Warren's chief counsel, J. Lee Rankin, the coverup of the FBI's advance knowledge that Oswald was a threat to Kennedy began a few hours after Kennedy was assassinated and Oswald was arrested by police inside a Dallas movie theater.

The papers reveal the following sequence of events:

At 2:50 p.m., less than 2½ hours after Kennedy was shot, Revill ran into Hosty, the FBI agent, in the basement of the Dallas City Hall. Hosty told Revill that the FBI was aware of Oswald being in Dallas and the bureau had information that Oswald was capable of assassinating the President of the United States.

Revill immediately reported Hosty's remarks to his superior, Capt. W P. Gannaway, who ordered Revill to put what Hosty had said down on paper. Revill did, dictating the statement to a police stenographer, who made two copies of it.

One of the copies was immediately sent to Curry. In his letter to Warren, six months later, Curry wrote: "When I received the report, I immediately real-

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ized the gravity and seriousness of the information it contained. Before newsmen, I stated that I had received information that the FBI knew of Oswald's presence in Dallas and that the Dallas Police Department had no information on Oswald in its files. This statement was based on the report of Lt. Revill."

Within minutes after Curry delivered his statement, Shanklin was on the phone to Curry. In Curry's letter to Warren, he wrote: "I received a telephone call from Mr. Gordon Shanklin in which Mr. Shanklin stated that the bureau was extremely desirous that I retract my statement to the press."

Curry did, saying, in his letter to Warren: "I then appeared before the press again, and retracted my statement to this extent: I stated that 'of my own personal knowledge' I did not know that the FBI knew of Oswald's presence in Dallas."

At neither of Curry's press briefings, however, did he reveal the other half of Revill's statement — that Agent Hosty told Revill the FBI had information that Oswald was capable of assassinating the President.

After making his retraction, Curry (according to his letter to Warren) then instructed Revill to keep his statement confidential. Curry wrote to Warren explaining that Revill, in compliance with his instructions, locked his copy of the statement in his desk drawer and kept it there for the next five months.

(Revill, in an interview with the Chronicle last week, said he had not personally kept the statement in his desk, but that he turned it over to a police captain and never saw it again. He said he had forgotten about it until Curry delivered it to the Warren Commission.)

The Revill statement was revealed first when Curry personally delivered it to the Warren Commission on April 22, 1964

A month later, on May 21, 1964, Rankin, the commission counsel, wrote a confidential letter to Curry and asked him why it took so long for the statement to reach the Warren Commission.

Curry sidestepped Rankin and wrote his registered, confidential letter directly to Warren, dated May 28, 1964, in which he admitted that he had suppressed the statement at the request of Shanklin of the FBI.

There is no record in the archives that Warren, Rankin, or anyone else from the Warren Commission answered Curry's letter.

Today, 12 years later, Curry says the Warren Commission "probably forgot about it."

Hosty, the FBI agent quoted in the Revill statement as saying the bureau had information that Oswald was a potential assassin, is still with the bureau and based in Kansas City. He refused to discuss any aspect of the Kennedy assassination in a recent interview with the Chronicle and referred all questions to FBI headquarters in Washington.

Hosty said, "I'm still with the bureau; I like my job; I can't say anything about anything."

But, in his testimony before the Warren Commission on May 5, 1964, the following exchange took place between Hosty and John McCloy, a member of the commission:

McCloy: "Don't you think the combination of the fact that you knew he (Oswald) was lying and that he was a defector and that he had this record with the Fair Play for Cuba, that he might be involved in some intrigue that would be if not necessarily violent, he was a dangerous security risk?"

Hosty: "He was a security risk of a sort, but not the type of person who would engage in violence. That would be the indication."

Shanklin, now an attorney in Dallas, having retired from the FBI recently, said:

"I don't know what he's (Curry) talking about. Why would I have called him? Yeah, O.K., so many things happened on that day, I may have called Curry about one thing or another, but I don't remember calling him to tell him to suppress anything. I don't know what he's talking about.

"I'm gonna have to call Washington on this . . ."

Revill, now in the tactical division of the Dallas Police Department, said he stands by his statement to this day.

"You bet, I do. It happened, I know it happened, and Hosty knows it happened. Hosty is a friend of mine or at least he was. I hesitated to do it at the time, write it down like that, because I knew Hosty would get crucified. It's tragic the way he was ostracized by the bureau."

Curry, now a vice-president in charge of security at a Dallas Bank, recalled in an interview with the Chronicle his conversation with Shankin nearly 12 years ago.

"His words were, 'Jesse, you got to retract that damn thing or I'm sunk,' or words to that effect, you know, that if he couldn't get me to retract the statement that they'd (the FBI) take some action against him.

"I no more than made the statement (to the media) in the hall of the city hall . . . probably, I'd say, 250 feet from my office, and I walked on down the hall and by the time I got to my office, he (the late J. Edgar Hoover, FBI chief) had already been on the telephone from Washington and talked to Shanklin and Shanklin was waiting to talk to me, telling me, you know, that I was gonna have to retract that statement."

When asked if he would have released the full text of Revill's statement, if he had it to do over again today, he answered:

"I probably would have even though I'd know it would make the FBI mad as hell because I had confidence in my lieutenant that gave me the information and it was checked out and found to be true so there was enough evidence there to carry out the fact the FBI did know something about Harvey Oswald."

Curry said, "We had about a dozen and a half people under surveillance that day. We thought they would do something to embarrass him (Kennedy). Throw things at him or something. I didn't think anybody would try to kill him.

"Had they told me at that time there was a guy named Lee Harvey Oswald, who'd been raising a little hell down here in New Orleans, and somebody ought to keep an eye on him, I'd a had somebody sitting on him.

"I'd a found out more about him and I'd a had somebody sitting up on the sixth floor with him, or I'd a kept him out of the building. But not knowing anything about him, why, we didn't do anything. All those we were the least bit suspicious about, we had somebody with them that day."

Warren Commission counsel Rankin, now an attorney in New York City, was unavailable.

Following is a reproduction of then Dallas police chief Jesse Curry's letter to Chief Justice Earl Warren explaining Curry's role in the coverup of Lt. Jack Revill's statement that FBI agent James Hosty told him the FBI had information that Lee Harvey Oswald was capable of assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

May 28, 1964

REGISTERED

CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable Earl Warren, Chairman
President's Commission on the
Assassination of President Kennedy
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D. C. 20002

Dear Sir:

In a letter to me dated May 21, 1964, Mr. J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, raised several points concerning Lieutenant Jack Revill's report of November 22, 1963, on his conversation with FBI Agent James Hosty on that date.

The first question posed by Mr. Rankin was why Lieutenant Revill's report was not made known to the Commission prior to my appearance before that group. When I received the report on November 22, 1963, I immediately realized the gravity and seriousness of the information it contained. On that date, before newsmen, I stated that I had received information that the FBI knew of Oswald's presence in Dallas and that the Dallas Police Department had no information on Oswald in its files. This statement was based on the report of Lieutenant Revill.

Within a few minutes of my statement to the press, I received a telephone call from Mr. Gordon Shanklin, Special Agent in charge of the Dallas Office of the FBI, in which Mr. Shanklin stated that the Bureau was extremely desirous that I retract my statement to the press. I then appeared before the press again, and retracted my statement to this extent: I stated that "of my own personal knowledge" I did not know that the FBI knew of Oswald's presence in Dallas, and that if they did they were under no obligation to the Dallas Police Department to pass on the information.

After the appointment of the Warren Commission, I was reasonably sure I would appear before that body, so I decided to present the report, personally, at the time of my appearance. I felt that the Commission would probably like for the statement to be notarized, so I had this done on April 7, 1964.

Mr. Rankin's next question concerned the date that the report was placed in the Intelligence Unit's files. I instructed Lieutenant Revill to keep this report confidential. He said that after his copy was returned to him, he kept it locked in his desk drawer until after I returned from Washington where I delivered the report to the Commission. He then placed his report in the files.

Mr. Rankin further asked if I know of any additional information in the possession of the Dallas Police Department that had not been made available to the Commission. I know of no such information.

Very truly yours,

J. E. Curry

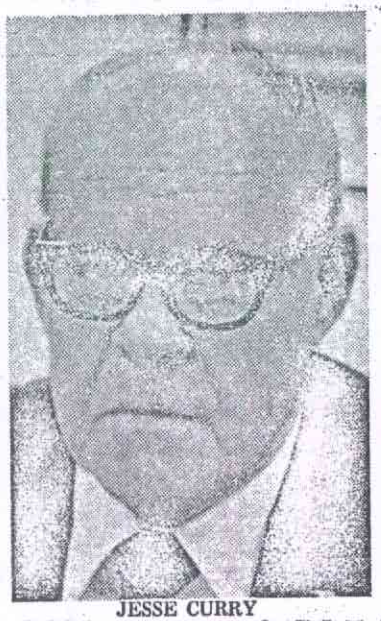
J. E. Curry
Chief of Police

JEC:ES

cc: Hon. Waggoner Carr
Attorney General of Texas

Mr. J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel, President's Commission

LEE HARVEY OSWALD



JESSE CURRY

JACK REVILL (1964 photo)